

Castro Admits 1962 Error

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Although Cuban Premier Fidel Castro says he was furious in 1962 when Russia removed its missiles from his country, he now admits he was wrong, Sen. George McGovern reports.

The South Dakota Democrat said Friday that when he visited Cuba in May, Castro told him, "I would have taken a harder line than [Soviet leader Nikita] Khrushchev" on the Cuban missile crisis.

He quoted Castro further as saying: "I was furious when he compromised. But Khrushchev was older and wiser. I realize in retrospect that he reached the proper settlement with President John F. Kennedy."

"If my position had prevailed, there might have been

a terrible war. I was wrong," McGovern said. Castro told him.

The quotations were recorded in a report by McGovern to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the senator's nine hours of conversation with Castro.

McGovern said Castro and Vice Premier Carlos Rafael Rodriguez told him "they were aware of the CIA efforts to assassinate them—as many as a hundred attempts, they said, although not all were attributed to the CIA."

But McGovern added, "apparently he (Castro) has no real fear of such plots now," and he moves easily among the Cuban people.

McGovern recommended in his report that the United States end its trade embargo

against Cuba and "explicitly acknowledge an interest" in establishment normal diplomatic relations.

Cuba has made overtures in the form of an anti-hijacking agreement in 1973 and the recent return to Southern Airways of nearly \$2 million in ransom money taken from hijackers in 1972, he noted.

"These gestures deserve a meaningful response," McGovern said in a statement accompanying the release of his report.

He said the United States already has missed its chance to improve relations by merely dropping a ban on selling food and medicine to Cuba, and that "the only step of sufficient significance now would be to drop the embargo entirely."